



WISEWOMAN

Success Story 10 *A New Leaf* Helps North Carolina Women Cope with Emotional Addiction to Tobacco

Location North Carolina

Focus Help women quit smoking by addressing their physical and emotional addiction to tobacco.

Strategy WISEWOMAN staff members have used the lifestyle intervention *A New Leaf...Choices for Healthy Living* to guide women through the process of quitting smoking. They lead each WISEWOMAN participant through the manual step by step to help her make healthy lifestyle changes.

Early Successes The assessment tools in the *New Leaf* manual help each WISEWOMAN participant identify the emotional issues related to her smoking and the barriers to quitting. WISEWOMAN staff members support women who are trying to make lifestyle changes by helping them set realistic goals for improving their health and quitting smoking. Since 2000, the North Carolina WISEWOMAN program has helped 14% of its enrollees who smoke to quit using tobacco.

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A New Leaf Helps North Carolina Women Cope with Emotional Addiction to Tobacco

Tobacco use is an integral part of North Carolina's culture. Many North Carolina women grew up watching their mothers and fathers smoke, or worse, lighting cigarettes for parents. Today, 27% of the women who are active participants in North Carolina's WISEWOMAN program are smokers. They often use tobacco to try to cope with stresses in their lives. Sally, for example, is a WISEWOMAN participant who started smoking in her early 50s to relax. She was having personal problems and thought smoking would help her escape feelings of depression and anxiety.

Coordinators working in WISEWOMAN clinics talk to women every day who are physically and emotionally addicted to tobacco. They encourage these women to quit by telling them about the state tobacco cessation QuitLine and giving them brochures on women and smoking. Perhaps most importantly, they rely on the lifestyle intervention *A New Leaf...Choices for Healthy Living* as they coach women through the difficult process of quitting.

The first time a woman visits a WISEWOMAN clinic she gets a copy of *A New Leaf*. The manual is written for WISEWOMAN participants and is designed to be a workbook the women can use to improve their health. A WISEWOMAN staff member goes through the *New Leaf* manual with each woman to identify her current health practices and attitudes, help her make lifestyle changes one step at a time, and increase her confidence in making these changes.

WISEWOMAN staff members use *A New Leaf* to determine how ready and willing a woman is to make a lifestyle change that will improve her health. If she is a smoker, staff will use the smoking assessment tool, which is part of the manual, to find out why she smokes, when she smokes most, and any special barriers to quitting.

"*A New Leaf* is a great tool," WISEWOMAN coordinator Lori Green says. "It helps us find out if there are things going on in a woman's life that influence her smoking. Maybe she's

worried she will gain weight if she quits, or maybe she's depressed, like Sally (not her real name), and smoking helps her forget about her problems for a few minutes."

"These women are dealing with a number of issues: low income, unemployment, lack of health care, and multiple health problems," Director Carolyn R. Townsend adds. "We try to be someone they can talk to about what they are struggling with. We provide information about resources that might be of help to the women."



WISEWOMAN Health Educator Belinda Branson uses *A New Leaf* manual to help North Carolina women set a quit date, deal with triggers to smoking, and understand how their bodies will change when they quit smoking.

A New Leaf also offers a list of quitting tips. It advises WISEWOMAN staff on how to help women set a quit date and deal with triggers to smoking. It also explains how a woman's body will change when she quits smoking, what will happen the first day, the first month, and the first year after she quits. "Sharing this information with women who smoke—even if they are at the pre-contemplative stage—it helps motivate them to quit," Lori says.

Importance of Success

Since 2000, the North Carolina WISEWOMAN program has helped 14% of its enrollees who smoke to quit using tobacco. Sally quit smoking in April 2003 and is still enrolled in the WISEWOMAN program.

Lessons Learned

- Women can get physically and emotionally addicted to tobacco. Identify ways to help them address both types of addiction.
- Women who are struggling to quit smoking need someone to talk to about the emotional issues that may play a role in their habit. Using a structured tool can give staff a consistent way to help women set healthy goals and quit smoking. Be someone they can trust and offer them a safe time to talk about their problems.
- A well-developed lifestyle intervention that addresses the social influences of smoking can assist women in their efforts to stop smoking.